

and " L'Assommoir " are living books, the  
greatest their  
author ever penned.

Passing to " La D^hdcle/\* this is certainly a  
wonderfully  
truthful panorama of war and its horrors,  
though the  
psychology of several of its characters is open  
to criticism.  
Too many of them lack robustness; they seem  
too full of  
nerves to be regarded as typical. In the case  
of Maurice,  
a mere degenerate, the picture is accurate  
enough; but  
assuredly many feelings "which Zola and others  
have attrib-  
uted to soldiers are little known in actual  
war. The ma-  
jority of military men are far less sensitive than  
some have  
said, and incident often follows incident so  
rapidly in real  
battle that there is no time for thought or  
emotion at all  
" La Terre " also has faults, the outcome of  
Zola's refoxrniig  
purpose, which led him to assemble too many  
black charac-  
ters within a small circle; had they been more  
dispersed  
among people of an average kind the effect  
would have  
been more lifelike. In " Nana" the general  
blackness of  
the characters does not seem out of place, for  
only men and  
women of a sorry sort gravitate around a  
harlot. A few  
more average characters in "La Terre/ or,  
rather, more  
prominence given to some who scarcely appear  
in its pages  
would have greatly improved the book.  
Here, however,  
as in " Pot-Bouille," Zola, carried away by his  
feelings, over-  
looked that doctrine of average truth, of which

Ste.-Beuve

had reminded him apropos of "Th^rkse Raquin." He then admitted that he had piled on the agony unduly, and he made the same mistake in two or three volumes of "Les

pilation at his elbow while he was writing, and every time he borrowed from it a word or expression he marked the latter with, a "blue pencil, in order to avoid too frequent a repetition of the same term.